



STATE OF DELAWARE  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF  
STATE PLANNING COORDINATION

July 8, 2004

Mr. John S. Giles, Jr.  
Town of Elsmere  
11 Poplar Avenue  
Elsmere, DE 19805

RE: PLUS review – PLUS 2004-06-07 – Town of Elsmere Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mr. Giles:

Thank you for meeting with State agency planners on June 23, 2004 to discuss the proposed draft of the Town of Elsmere Comprehensive Plan. After reviewing the plan, we find that it is a very well written and informative document that identifies the current issues being dealt with by the town and gives clear recommendations for addressing those issues.

The current draft meets all certification requirements and no changes are required; however, we would like to offer the following comments that State agencies believe will further strengthen the document.

**Office of State Planning Coordination – Contact: Herb Inden 577-5188**

It should be noted that the Town of Elsmere has not included an annexation plan with in the document; however the Town has included a large “Area of Concern.” The Town noted interest in being involved in the planning of these areas.

**State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – Contact: Anne McCleave 739-5685**

The State Historic Preservation Office noted that they were happy to read that Elsmere is interested in developing historic preservation objectives and programs, such as the Main Street Program offered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. As the Town develops its historic preservation program, it should also consider the following:

- The Town should begin by surveying and inventorying its historic resources. There has been some surveys done for a number of properties in Elsmere; however the Town should review those surveys (located in the SHPO office) to gain an understanding of what remains to be completed and updated.
- Once the survey is completed and the Town has an understanding of its historic resources, an evaluation should be performed to assess whether there is an eligible historic district or individual properties.
- With the designation of a historic district and individual historic properties (properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places), the properties become eligible for a number of financial incentives, such as preservation grants and State and federal historic preservation tax credits. The incentives will help towards the preservation and maintenance of buildings and with the establishment of a successful Main Street program.
- In addition, the Town could develop a historic preservation ordinance, which would allow for the review of projects taking place on historic properties by a historic review board.
- The review board meetings could provide a setting for the public to discuss preservation issues and concerns.
- The ordinance could allow for a Historic zone to be established, providing additional protection and incentives for historic properties and establishing design standards.
- The Town might also consider developing design standards and guidelines for the Main Street, even if Main Street is not designated as a historic district. Such guidelines would help retain the historic appearance and small town feel that the Town and its residents desire.

The State Historic Preservation Office has noted that they would be happy to assist in any of these steps to help the Town reach its preservation goals.

**Department of Transportation – Contact: Bill Brockenbrough 760-2109**

- 1) On page 22, in the section on the Environmental Protections Plan, Recommendation Nine reads “The town should work with DelDOT and the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) to monitor activity along Kirkwood Highway.” It is unclear what this recommendation means. What specifically would DelDOT, WILMAPCO or the Town do?

- 2) In the Transportation section, there is a statement on page 51 that “The town would like to see vehicular speed [on Kirkwood Highway] reduced to 25 miles per hour to improve the pedestrian environment and encourage a main street atmosphere.” This statement is followed by Recommendation Five on page 53, “Continue to work with DelDOT to reduce traffic speeds along Kirkwood Highway.”

DelDOT noted that they appreciate that the Town would like to have lower speeds on Kirkwood Highway. There are things that could be done to the roadside environment to encourage lower speeds, and if the Town wants to do them they should discuss some specific measures in the Plan. DelDOT would consider implementing these measures as part of a Transportation Enhancement project (See comment 3 below.). However, it may not be possible to attempt to achieve a speed reduction to as low as 25 miles per hour.

- 3) In the Economic Development Plan, Recommendation Two on page 64 is to “Rearrange traffic patterns along Kirkwood Highway to accommodate the new Main Street.” The supporting language that follows mentions “collaboration with DelDOT to implement landscaping designs, controlled signage, traffic calming measures, and a reduction in the speed limit along Elsmere’s portion of Kirkwood Highway.”

DelDOT has addressed speed limit reductions in comment 2 above. Regarding traffic calming, there are things such as bulbouts (bringing the curb out to the edge of the travel lane) that can encourage lower speeds and are often referred to under the general term “traffic calming.” However, DelDOT will only consider traffic calming measures that are consistent with the purpose and function of the road. Speed humps (changes in pavement height) or chicanes (obstacles forcing low speed turns) in the travelway are examples of devices that would not be appropriate.

One thing that the Plan does not mention is Transportation Enhancement (TE) projects. TE projects are DelDOT projects done to highlight the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of the transportation system. Much of what the Town seeks in improvements to Kirkwood Highway might be achieved through a TE project. While DelDOT is not prepared to undertake additional projects in 2004 or 2005, they will accept nominations for such projects for 2006. More information on TE projects is available at [www.deldot.net/static/Community\\_programs\\_services/trans\\_chnance/index.html](http://www.deldot.net/static/Community_programs_services/trans_chnance/index.html).

- 4) In Chapter 1, Public Participation, most of what is presented as public involvement is actually consultation with Town officials. It is recommended that the Town government clarify in the Plan its efforts to obtain input from the town’s residents.

- 5) There could be more in depth analysis of the very well presented information. For example, the Plan mentions that the Town's age profile matches that of the county and the state, but does not say why that is significant. In contrast, the Plan mentions that the town has a much higher percentage of "at-risk" households than the county or the state. This fact would seem to have significant implications with regard to the need for transit and social services, but those implications are not explored.

**The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control – Contact: Kevin Coyle 739-3091**

### **TMDLs**

It appears that Elsmere has addressed TMDLs in its Comprehensive Plan. One of the recommendations in Chapter 2 addresses trying to achieve the TMDLs through work with the Christina River Partnership. However, the Town may want to put more detailed actions within the recommendation pulling from items listed in the Christina Watershed Restoration Plan.

### **Stormwater Management and Drainage**

The Town has identified drainage and flooding concerns in the transportation section. Perhaps there could be more emphasis in the re-development section to look for opportunities for drainage improvements as part of the Town's re-development efforts.

In a synopsis of the resident's survey, stormwater management has been mentioned as a concern more often than any other issue that residents identified. This should provide some basis for inclusion in the plan for the need for more comprehensive planning for drainage improvements and maintenance.

### **Habitat**

A review of our database indicates that there is a record of *Battus philenor* (Pipevine swallowtail) located within Wilmington Marsh adjacent to the Christina River. Impacts to this rare species can be avoided by maintaining a vegetative buffer around the wetland of at least 100ft. Buffers reduce the amount of sediments, pollutants, and other non-point source material that could potentially affect the condition and survivability of organisms that rely on this habitat.

### **Parks, Open Space, and Recreation**

According to the Redevelopment Strategies (section 9-2), Recommendation 3 "Utilize and Expand Open Space and Parks" suggests that Elsmere should develop connecting greenway trails. We recommend that a series of stacking trail loops be designed with many access points and connections to adjacent communities. Community trail systems

with long continuous trails, perimeter-only trails, and systems with few access points, often go unused and neglected. For trail design/construction specifications, contact Susan Moerschel at (302) 739-5285.

### **Soils**

(Pg 13) It would be helpful if this section included additional information and/or maps regarding soils that are inappropriate for development.

### **Re-Greening of Elsmere Program**

(Pg 18) Implementation of this program will have a positive effect on the aesthetics and environment within Elsmere. There are additional programs available that may help provide funding and guidance for this program including a grant program administered through the Delaware Coastal Programs, "Habitat and Natural Resource Planning, Management and Protection Grants for Delaware's Local Governments and Communities." Additional programs that should be noted include the Delaware Department of Agriculture's Urban Forestry grant program and the New Castle County Conservation District Cost Share Programs.

### **Land Use Recommendations**

(Pg 68) DNREC strongly supports these recommendations. Competitive grant funding for review of zoning and subdivision codes for environmental considerations is available through the Delaware Coastal Programs Habitat and Natural Resource Planning, Management and Protection grant program.

### **Department of Agriculture - Contact: Mark Davis 739-4811**

It is noted that the Urban and Community Forestry program is currently working with the town to expand and promote urban forestry. In addition, the town is in the works to become a member of the Tree City USA.

### **Public Service Commission - Contact: Andra Maucher 739-4247**

The Town has noted that at this time, there are no intentions to annex; however, if the plan should be changed and the town decide to annex, it should be noted that the Public Service Commission should be contacted when a property is annexed and not within an existing CPCN.

### **Delaware State Housing Authority – Contact Karen Horton 739-4263**

The State Housing Authority stated that they support the recommendations in the plan. In particular,

- Property Maintenance and Housing Code Enforcement – This protects all members of

a community from those few who allow their properties to deteriorate to substandard conditions. However, the Town should be conscious of relocation issues.

- Review Zoning Code – The DSHA supports changes that encourage additional affordable housing, such as allowing accessory dwelling units as of right, that also encourage social- and economic-integration, and provide life-cycle housing.

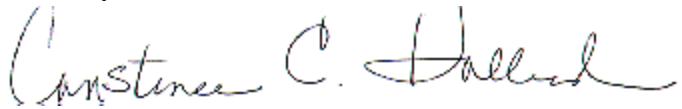
**Department of Education – Contact Nick Vacirca 739-4658**

The DOE noted that school should be considered as a conditional use in all residential areas.

The State asks that the Town review and consider the comments in this letter. As no certification issues were noted, the Town may adopt the plan. After adoption, please notify this office of the adoption and of any changes made to the plan before adoption. Providing no major changes, other than those requested in our letter, are made to the plan, the State will move forward on the certification of this plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions, please contact me at 302-739-3090.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Constance C. Holland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Constance" being the most prominent part.

Constance C. Holland, AICP  
Director

CC: Ed O'Donnell